

SPECIAL PERSONNEL/ADMINISTRATIVE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

JULY 18, 2022

A special meeting of the Personnel/Administrative Affairs Committee was held Monday, July 18, 2022, at 8:10 p.m. in the Aldermanic Chamber as well as via Zoom teleconference.

*To access Zoom, please refer to the agenda or the City's website for the meeting link.*

The roll call was taken with 5 members of the Personnel/Administrative Affairs Committee present:

Chairwoman Shoshanna Kelly presided.

Members of the Committee present: Alderwoman-at-Large Shoshanna Kelly, Chairwoman  
Alderman-at-Large Ben Clemons, Vice Chair  
Alderman Tyler Gouveia  
Alderman Thomas Lopez  
Alderman Derek Thibeault

Also in Attendance: Alderman-at-Large Lori Wilshire  
Alderman-at-Large Michael B. O'Brien, Sr.  
Alderman Patricia Klee  
Alderman-at-Large Melbourne Moran, Jr.  
Alderman Ernest A. Jette  
Alderman Richard A. Dowd  
Alderwoman-at-Large Gloria Timmons  
Mayor Jim Donchess  
Steve Bolton, Corporation Counsel  
Daniel Healey

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ROLL CALL

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

INTERVIEWS

Office of City Clerk

Daniel R. Healey Term to Expire: Indefinitely  
Derry, New Hampshire

Chairwoman Kelly

All right. Thank you. Mr. Mayor, would you like to introduce your selection, please?

Mayor Donchess

Oh, thank you, Madam Chair. And of course, I'm going to introduce my nominee Dan Healey but before that, I wanted to, again, say that it has been for the last many decades, several decades great to know Sue Lovering who I had the honor of appointing as City Clerk several years ago. I think she has followed in the footsteps of other City Clerks that we've had that have done a very good job. She did work very hard on the 2020 election with all of the absentee voting. Despite the many, many challenges concerning that, the election went very smoothly and it was just because of her long hours and dedication. But beyond that, she's just a wonderful person. She used to work for the Board of Aldermen. I have had the honor of appointing two City Clerks - Eleanor Benson, who was another fantastic person and serve better than a dozen years maybe. Sue Lovering and now I'm here to nominate Dan Healey, who is a very qualified nominee. Mr. Healey is Town Clerk at the Town of Derry, which is a town of about 30,000 people. He has been in that office for six years and of course has learned the elections from start to finish. He's also been very active in the New Hampshire City and Town Clerks Association educating himself there. He is now second Vice President of that Association, which means that he's in the queue to move up to Vice President and President. He is the Legislative Committee Co-Chair of the same organization - City and Town Clerk's Association. They review all the bills before the legislature, make recommendations to the Executive Committee of the Clerk's Association, and then based upon the decisions of the Executive Committee, the Chair of the - Mr.

Healey has testified before the legislature on various issues concerning elections and other concerns of city and town clerks. He is also a Vice Chair of the Certification Committee of the Clerks Association meaning that committee oversees the education or the certification of clerks across New Hampshire, set up the courses, the curriculum, and run yearly annual one week courses that are given for town clerks and city clerks.

So I think you can I think you can gather from all of that, that he's very well qualified for this job, and will not need a lot of on the job training, and will certainly serve I believe the City of Nashua very well. With that, I will give you Mr. Healey and ask him to tell you a little bit about himself and why he's interested in working for Nashua City Clerk.

Daniel Healey

Thank you, Mayor Donchess. You pretty much covered everything there but I've been Town Clerk of Derry for six years. I was first elected in 2016 for a three year term. I've run two additional times, been elected twice more. So I'm currently serving in my third term. The year that I started, I signed up for certification that August. It's a three year program, one week a year. So I obtained my New Hampshire City and Town Clerk's Association Certification in 2019, which was the earliest that I could obtain that. I've since gone on and obtain International Institute and Municipal Clerk Association certification. I received that in March of this year. So that's international certified.

Currently, like the Mayor has stated, I am second Vice President of the New Hampshire City and Town Clerk's Association. I was voted by my peers on a ballot at our last conference to that position. So I'm hoping to move up in October of this year to Vice President and then the following year, President of that Association.

I've done many elections in Derry. I first came on my very first election was actually the primary in 2016, followed by the general election in 2016. So when I started, I was thrown right into elections. I've done many since then. In 2020 obviously a very different time, very difficult. Our office was open for voters to come in. We had lines out the door every day for absentee ballots. We processed around 6,500 absentee ballots in Derry with a staff of myself and then two part-time employees. We did have occasional help from other employees in the building, but we managed to get all those ballots out and not a single issue in that election. We had the largest polling place in the State, being one polling place. We used our high school. We had about 13,000 voters through on that day and the additional 6,500 absentee ballots around 18 - 19,000 voters that we processed with no issues.

I know the issuing of vital records, marriage licenses. I know all that stuff - the dog licensing. I'm very familiar with all the processes, the Right to Know Law. We get quite a few Right to Knows. Being a larger community, very familiar with that process - what's public, what's not public, and in getting back to the resident or the requester in a timely manner on those issues. So I'd be open to any questions if you do have them.

Chairwoman Kelly

Thank you for that. We'll open it up to questions. I'm gonna go with committee members first and then I'll call on you. You can keep your hand up just so you guys know.

Alderman Lopez

I always feel like it's rude to just leave that out there. So Mr. Healey as a currently elected City Clerk – you're a Town Clerk I guess, in Derry is there any kind of conflict of interest? Do you have to step down? Can you just do both roles currently if appointed here?

Daniel Healey

So if appointed here, I would be resigning in Derry. That would be a conflict. There's too many - I mean they're both full time positions. That being the main thing and there's too many dates that would be conflicts. The primary and the general election would fall on the same day. It would be impossible to do both positions.

Alderman Lopez

Just as a follow up, I notice you went to high school at Pinkerton so Derry seems like it's very close to you. So I appreciate you putting yourself forward for this because Nashua is another great community and we would be lucky to have you based on the qualifications that I see.

Daniel Healey

Thank you. So being a Town Clerk, you have to live in the community which you serve. So being the Derry Clerk, I had to reside in Derry but being the City Clerk being an appointed position, I could remain in Derry.

Alderman Lopez

Right, I didn't expect you to move.

Alderman Thibeault

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. So my question you already took my Right to Know question away. So I'm not going to ask that. But can you tell me about a time that you had a really tough citizen come in and how you dealt with it if that happened?

Daniel Healey

Yeah it's rare. The main thing is we try to – well we do follow all the laws. So we have resident's question, you know, why am I being fined this civil forfeiture for my dog? Well, it's an RSA. So usually if you know the laws to back it up, it makes the situation a little bit easier because they're questioning why they're getting this fine, or they're questioning why they can't have access to this record. But if you have the law, that's typically what I've guided them towards and usually with difficult customers after residents after a little while of explaining, the majority seems to understand. Although they might not be happy with the result, they at least understand the process.

There's a few occasions where they've just come in and basically to argue and you know they're if they're not getting their way, they're not going to be happy. So in that situation if it's going around for too much back and forth, it's basically well this is the law that we have to follow so that there's not much more that we can do for you.

Alderman Thibeault

Have you ever had to call the police on someone?

Daniel Healey

I have not. So the closest to that would be at a polling location where someone was not following the rules of that polling location. We had an officer already stationed inside. So just going out and discussing with that person having a police officer discuss, but I haven't had to call an officer to the Town Hall.

Alderman Thibeault

Thank you.

Alderman Clemons

Thank you. So thank you for your candidacy and for wanting to be the Clerk in Nashua. Elections are very near and dear to my heart because I believe the foundation of our democracy. So my question to you is I guess I have two questions. One is regarding election security and the safeguarding of both the polling place and ballots. I want to know what your thoughts are on that.

Daniel Healey

So the way that I run the elections in Derry currently is we receive our ballots from the Secretary of State's office for a State federal election. We open up the ballots. We verify that they are the correct ballots for our town. We inventory them. So we count them into stacks of 100, reseal them with the resealing label. Two people sign that. Typically myself and the Deputy Clerk. Then they're locked in the vault until Election Day. So no one is going in there and touching those ballots until Election Day. There's actually a camera in the vault. I imagined something similar here.

In the morning, I arrive at the Town Hall with our DPW and we bring the ballots out front and two, we have Town Councilors in Derry. Two Town Councilors - one from each party will show up and watch those ballots be loaded into the truck and they will actually ride with DPW to the polling place, bring them in, and have them for use during the day. They're behind the Clerk's table and the Clerk is the only one that brings them to the ballot clerks during the day.

At night when they're put - well throughout the day when the ballot counting machine box fills up, the cardboard boxes that the ballots came in are loaded back up. They have the red tape put on them – the security tape. All the signatures required and they're stored at the polling place until it closes for the night. Then we had a police escort. We use the police van to bring them back to the Town Hall and I watch them go into the vaults at our Town Hall. When they get to the vault, I sign that I received all of them and its back under the camera. After the recount period expires, they're moved in the Town Hall down into the basement into another secure vault. So we take the ballot security very seriously.

Alderman Clemons

Yeah, just to follow up. Thank you for that. I appreciate that. I know in Nashua, you know, probably it's that times nine because we have nine polling places. I'm just happy to know that, you know, we take it seriously too. We have police details at all nine polls. It's an expensive process, right? It's an expensive process to safeguard democracy and I'm just glad that you feel the same way.

My second question is more, I guess you could call it a State issue if you will but seeing as how you the position you hold, what's your thoughts on paper ballots?

Daniel Healey

So what do you mean by paper ballots? Not going digital with...

Alderman Clemons

Correct.

Daniel Healey

I like a paper ballot backup. I don't want the process to – in my opinions, I don't want the process to be all on a computer. Last week I actually attended a meeting in Concord where they had two new ballot counting machines out for display kind of a test run. One of them was, you know, the ballots all created on the machine. The feeling among town clerks, at least the ones that I've talked to I've gathered, is that we'd prefer the paper physical ballot and it's a good backup.

Alderman Clemons

Thank you. I agree with you 100% on that. You've satisfied my two biggest concerns and thank you again for bringing your candidacy forward. I certainly will support you.

Daniel Healey

Thank you.

Alderman Gouveia

Thank you, Madam Chair and thank you for your candidacy. I'm happy to hear how seriously taken election integrity a lot like Alderman Clemens is an issue I like to check up on him. But along the same lines of elections going from one polling location to nine polling locations around the City of Nashua, obviously a bigger challenge and a bigger city. Is that something you're ready for?

Daniel Healey

Yes. I'm actually glad you asked that when Alderman Clemons mentioned the nine polling places. When I started in Derry, we had three polling places. So we found out that we could work with one and we prefer that just because it's easier to manage the one, but I have managed three. It's a little bit more of a challenge getting all the staffing and those logistics but we've had to separate out okay, so this is going to this polling place, this is going to this polling place. So I have had some experience with that in the past. I believe the first year we started with just the one polling place was actually 2020 because we found one that was large enough that could accommodate everyone again being spaced out. I don't think nine will be a problem because I do have some experience with multiple polling locations.

Alderman Gouveia

Thank you Madam Chair. And just the second question I had was what makes you want to make the jump to become the City Clerk in Nashua?

Daniel Healey

I think I'm ready for a new challenge. I've been in Derry for six years. I know the city runs a little bit differently but I just kind of am looking for a new opportunity. My staff currently in Derry is great and they're going to do a great job if I move on. I've been there six years - over six years and I think it's in a good spot now but I think I'm ready for kind of something new.

Chairwoman Kelly

So my question is, obviously you're very qualified. You've worked in Derry. I think that the last few years especially had been especially trying for people during COVID. It was really incumbent upon city and town clerks to make sure people knew exactly how to vote, and where to vote, and how those things has changed. So I'm wondering how you guys handled it in Derry and, you know, if something were that hopefully we don't have another global pandemic happen but like how you would handle it here?

Daniel Healey

We did a lot of outreach. I had a Town Clerk Facebook page. Our Town Moderator had a Facebook page. We did a lot of posting. We constantly update our website, which sent out emails to all our subscribers. We ordered signs to put around town to tell people where they were voting since it change. We tried to just do a lot of outreach to residents just to make sure that they knew where they voted, how they could vote, if they wanted to vote by absentee, if they want to vote in person what the process was. So the biggest thing was outreach and making sure that the residents knew what options were available to them. Our office, I mean, emails, phone calls. We were getting them nonstop during the 2020 election. Since we had such a small staff, I was probably working double the time just to make sure that the election did run smooth, but I think outreach to the residents was the biggest thing.

Chairwoman Kelly

Thank you. I'll hold my next question.

Alderman Thibeault

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. So Nashua is certainly is a challenge. There's no doubt about that. We've been in working at the polls when we've had a lot of chaos going on and nine wards can be tough to get to. But, you know, the question I have, and this is not on Sue at all, but I think once COVID started, we had a lack of really training the poll workers better as far as the moderators, the ward clerks, I guess, selectmen and we did a lot more zoom training. Even like, here's a PowerPoint, read it. Is that something - did you do training yourself to the staff at the elections or at the polling places, and is that something you would do here as well?

Daniel Healey

So initially when I first started, I did do the training for the first few years. Our Town Moderator took that over within the last few years. But being Legislative Committee Co-Chair, I was up in Concord often or I was up in Concord often following the election bills. So I know the changes that are coming. Even if you were trained for 2020, there's been some changes just based off this last session. So I'm comfortable doing the training. I haven't done the training myself in probably a few years like an actual training. I have trained some poll workers on some things at the polls throughout the day, but the actual training I haven't done in the few years but I'm comfortable doing it. I follow all the election laws and the changes constantly.

Alderman Thibeault

Thank you. So here with nine moderators, right? One for each ward. So it's not just one. So I think that's more challenging and they change a lot, you know, the election we lose some we gain some. We actually have one out in the audience today - Tim from Ward 7. So I guess how do we make sure all our polling places are on the same page? I see what we did in our Ward and another Ward might do something different. Maybe it's a smaller venue for the election. Maybe it's a bigger place. Trying to get everybody on the same page and making sure that the

integrity is there. I'll tell you, there's not a cop that or a policeman that follows our people back to City Hall after we're done. There's just not. Sometimes there's one at the end of the night, sometimes there's not depending on the size of the election. So you don't always have that same going through each of the polls. How do you make sure it's consistent between each one because you want Nashua to run as it's one even though it's nine separate ones?

Daniel Healey

Yeah, but that's the goal. I think the biggest thing would be to train the moderators and the ward clerks first and then kind of run the training with all the additional poll workers afterward. I wouldn't want one polling location, even a minor thing running different than another one especially say if a resident sees that if they're at one poll location and something different is going on at another location. To me, that's not good. So I would want them all to be run the same, get the same reports from all of them but I think the biggest thing first would be training the people that run the individual locations on what the procedures are and then any additional poll workers for that day after that.

Alderman Thibeault

Thank you.

Alderman Wilshire

Thank you. First of all Mayor, I'd like to thank you for bringing forward such a great candidate. I think Mr. Healey has kind of the right mix of education, experience, professional certifications, and probably a little bit of thick skin. I mean you kind of have to have that to go along with the job as well. So I appreciate that, too. I don't really have any questions. I've been listening to all the questions you've answered. I appreciate all your answers. I think they were very good and you'll be getting my support from this.

Daniel Healey

Thank you.

Alderman Wilshire

You're welcome.

Alderman Moran

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. Thank you for coming in. I just have one question and kind of like the climate of elections in this country, do you believe in fair and free elections?

Daniel Healey

I do. Yes.

Alderman Moran

Thank you. That's all I have.

Alderman Klee

Thank you so much. And Mr. Healy, thank you for being willing to come to the City of Nashua. It's my favorite city but putting that aside, one of the things that I've noticed as a candidate who's run for the State as well as for the city is the, and I think the Alderman to my right here used the proper word "the climate". The climate is becoming more and more hostile and I can tell you over the last couple of elections, both municipal and State, US, however you want to look at it, the anger and even the treatment of candidates that are holding signs, treatment of each other, things being yelled at each other, I can tell you that I had to call the Clerk's office and even our moderator and so on because of some of the behavior. How do you handle a handle that? I mean it got nasty to the point of even being spit on by people, and candidates telling people if you're a Democrat, you go down the street to vote. It got pretty bad. So how would you handle situations like that?

Daniel Healey

So if they're candidates and they're saying something that they shouldn't, I mean they can be reported to the Secretary of State's Office, Attorney General and then they would look into that. The biggest thing that I've been telling my residents that might have some concerns over the elections or, you know, they just don't feel good about them is to come work an election. That's the best thing that I've come up with. If they don't trust our process and that's what they're angry about, then come actually work the election. If you want to be a ballot clerk, or if you want to be a greeter, or if you want to count at the end of the night the write ins, and you can see that, you know, everything there is legitimate. The machine printed out the results. These people they sat together and they counted the hand counts, the write ins. If it's a situation where someone's being spit on, I mean I think that's a point where a police officer would get involved.

I've gone out and I've talked with candidates that are getting slightly unruly and they're usually fine after a little bit but a situation like that, I mean, a candidate or someone holding a sign shouldn't be spit on. So that would be a situation for a police officer. Just in terms of you know if they're not confident in elections, come work and see.

Alderman Klee

Thank you. Good answer.

Alderman Jette

Thank you, Madam Chairman. So elections are important but, you know, there's only what one or two a year. Most of your time, your office is dealing with a lot of things. Most of our citizens, their contact with City Hall is pretty much largely the City Clerk's office. I'd be interested in what your philosophy is. I hope this is a softball question for you, but what your philosophy is about, you know, dealing with the public? You know I know oftentimes, you know, you hold important records - death certificates, birth certificates, marriage licenses, and oftentimes people are under time constraints. They have deadlines to meet and they may be doing something they should have done a week ago, but here it is the last minute. They were under a lot of pressure. How do you view your role in yourself dealing with the public but in managing a large staff that deals with the public?

Daniel Healey

Well in most towns and cities, I know the city clerk's office, town clerk's offices is the first contact. So our office now fields a lot of calls where people are calling us just because they don't know who else to call in the building. So a lot of it's just the redirecting. As far as getting things that they need, we don't have many pending, I'd say, requests out there. So if someone needs a certificate, that's a pretty quick process with us. So we try to accommodate I guess any resident or someone that needs something that to the best that we can. If we can't, we then direct them to where they can get the help that they need.

Alderman Jette

Thank you.

Alderman Dowd

Yes. I think you've got a great qualifications do a great job. So you have my support. I don't know what the Mayor's plan is for you to visit the nine polling locations but they're all schools. I work every day with the plant supervisor of school maintenance. If you want to visit the schools during the summer before they're full of noisy kids, he has the keys and we can visit the schools but it's up to between you and the Mayor. If you want to do that, I'll offer that up.

Daniel Healey

I'd be interested in seeing the different locations to the polling place and how they're, you know, what they look like inside. We do have the State Primary coming up in September. So it'd be good to see the area that they're all in and kind of like what the gym - I'm assuming most of them are the gym with what the setup kind of is.

Mayor Donchess

Madam Chair so our plan here is if assuming that Mr. Healey is confirmed on the 25<sup>th</sup>, he would start work on the 27<sup>th</sup>. So there would be time for him to acclimate to the polling places. I'm sure we can arrange. I think the idea of him visiting is a good one to get familiar with things.

Chairwoman Kelly

Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Other questions from Committee, Aldermen? Everybody feels good. Okay. That concludes our interview. We will move on to appointments by the Mayor.

APPOINTMENTS BY THE MAYOR

**MOTION BY ALDERMAN THIBEAULT TO RECOMMEND CONFIRMATION OF THE NEW APPOINTMENT OF DANIEL R. HEALEY AS CITY CLERK WITH AN INDEFINITE TERM  
MOTION CARRIED**

Chairwoman Kelly

Thank you for being here and answering all our questions.

Daniel Healey

Thank you.

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

GENERAL DISCUSSION - None

REMARKS BY THE ALDERMEN - None

ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION BY ALDERMAN LOPEZ TO ADJOURN  
MOTION CARRIED**

The meeting was declared closed at 8:44 p.m.

Alderman Derek Thibeault  
Committee Clerk